

## Section 2.5.23 River Road Overlay District Ordinance

### A. Purpose and Intent.

The purposes of this section are to:

1. Promote and enhance the aesthetic qualities of development within the arterial road corridor of River Road through the implementation of land use regulations, and within which amenity features are encouraged.
2. Provide management of the location and intensity of development within the arterial road corridor and to concentrate development in focus areas.
3. Provide safe access by vehicles and pedestrians to destinations in the corridor in a manner that does not conflict with access to individual developments or the roadway's primary purpose.
4. Promote the minimization of visual clutter along the City's major roadways.
5. Provide a quality and sustainable living environment for the citizens of Columbus.
6. Provide effective transitions between different uses, by planting trees, shrubs, groundcover and other landscaping material in open space areas, which enhance development of the urban environment by promoting shade, cooling the air through evaporation, restoring oxygen to the atmosphere, reducing glare and noise levels, and promoting an ecological habitat for animal and plant species.
7. Provide greater control over the aesthetic and functional characteristics of development along major thoroughfares and roadways that serve as major entrances to the community, where higher development standards can effectively enhance the City's image as a desirable place to live, work and shop.

### B. Definitions.

*Amenity:* Pedestrian shelters, gazebos, decorative paving, alternative transportation infrastructure, trees, landscaping, retention ponds when designed according to the specifications of this Ordinance, signage when scaled to the pedestrian and constructed of materials and sizes specified in this Ordinance and other aesthetic features and characteristics approved by the City.

*Corridor:* All lands that are undeveloped and/or any developed lands that are redeveloped after the date of adoption of this ordinance which are located within 750 feet of the right-of-way of River Road (starting at intersection with J.R. Allen Parkway and River Road and running north along River Road to the Harris County line) with a 750-foot depth at each intersection, or as shown on the official zoning map of the Columbus Consolidated Government.

*Focus areas:* An area of land within the Corridor, at the intersection of the Corridor and any other intersecting public road. Unless more specifically shown on the corridor overlay map, a focus area shall be generally limited to a square parcel of land extending 750 feet from the intersection to which it pertains, in both directions along the road rights-of-way. The focus area includes approximately thirteen (13) acres at each quadrant and can be larger or smaller by mutual agreement of the City and other interested parties.

### C. Applicability.

1. This Ordinance shall apply to all properties lying within the River Road Corridor, as shown on

the official zoning map and the overlay district map, which is hereby adopted and made a part of this Ordinance. Single-family residential homes are excluded from this ordinance. No clearing or other disturbance of land shall occur, and no building, structure or use shall be established, except in compliance with the provisions of this Ordinance and the Unified Development Ordinance.

2. These standards shall apply to all redevelopment activities. Redevelopment is defined as one or more of the following:
  - (A) Demolition of an existing building and rebuilding on the site.
  - (B) Expansion of the gross square footage of building's or a site's physical development by 50% or greater, from the date of the Ordinance inception

D. *Encouraged Uses.*

Mixed uses such as commercial, civic spaces, institutional uses and residences (including residential use in the same building with commercial), and office or other uses, are especially encouraged within Focus Areas.

E. *Design Requirements/Access.*

1. *Transportation/Infrastructure.*

- (A) *Vehicular Access to Site.* Within the Corridor, the subdivision of lots along an arterial road shall not be allowed if designed so that each lot has its own individual access to the major road unless approved by the Director of Engineering. Each pod of development, or if subdivided, each lot (including out parcels), shall be connected with on-site access to a frontage road or interconnecting driveway, rather than directly to the arterial road.
- (B) *Interparcel Access.* All land parcels, excluding single-family residential, fronting the Corridor right-of-way shall have interparcel connectivity via either a frontage road or a travel way that is delineated from parking areas such that short trips between developments can be made without use of the major road within the corridor. Within a focus area, development shall interconnect with the road or travel way network of any adjacent development or site within the focus area unless the Director of Engineering determines such connection would constitute an undue hardship.
- (C) *Sidewalks.* Sidewalks shall be required, located, and constructed as established under Chapter 7, Article 10, Subsections 7.10.2 and 7.10.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance and shall be adjacent to all non-limited access public rights-of-way.
- (D) *Pedestrian Access.* Pedestrian access should be provided to individual developments from any sidewalk, unless topography prohibits construction of facilities meeting Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Where medians are required, pedestrian access shall be provided across the median as approved by the Director of Engineering.

2. *Retail Developments.* For retail developments totaling 200,000 square feet or more of gross leasable area; or uses that result in a building of 100,000 square feet or more of gross leasable area whether by new construction or by expansion of existing uses, such developments shall also

comply with the Retail Developments of Community Significance section of this Unified Development Ordinance.

3. *Utility Location.* All new utility lines serving a development constructed after the effective date of this ordinance shall be located underground.

4. *Landscaping Requirements.*

- (A) *General.* All developments shall be landscaped, screened, and buffered in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of Chapter 4 of the Unified Development Ordinance except twenty (20) Tree Density Unit (TDU) per acre for all non-residential development shall be required. If the TDU requirement cannot be met, an administrative variance or tree replacement fund may be granted by the City Arborist according to Chapter 4, Articles 5 and 6 of the Unified Development Ordinance.
- (B) A minimum fifteen-foot wide landscaped strip adjacent to all road rights-of-way in non-residential developments shall be provided. Parking, merchandise displays, and off-street loading are prohibited in the landscaped strip.
- (C) A minimum ten-foot wide landscaped strip shall be provided between primary developments and adjacent out parcels in accordance with Section 4.5.8 of the Unified Development Ordinance.
- (D) A minimum of one (1) large-maturing tree per forty (40) linear feet of frontage shall be planted in the fifteen-foot wide landscaped strip as required above. Clustering of trees may be permitted if approved by the City Arborist.

5. *Parking/Yard, Height and Setback.*

- (A) *Location of Parking Areas.* Buildings should be located at the corner of sites closest to the road intersection, so that the parking areas are screened by the building from view of any public road, and so that the travel path from public sidewalks is shortened. Parking must be located in a way that is not visually dominant. Parking between buildings and an arterial road is discouraged, but if necessary, requirements of section 2.5.19.E.5. (D) (*Screening of Parking Areas*) must be met. If parking is located in the side or rear yards, any screening may be clustered and need not cover 100% of frontage.
- (B) Up to 25% of the required parking spaces for any development may be reduced in total area, width, or depth for designated small vehicle parking. Each small vehicle parking space shall not be less than eight feet in width and seventeen (17) feet in depth.
- (C) All nonresidential developments shall meet the at least one of the following requirements:

(1)

<b>Gross Square Feet</b>	<b>Maximum % of Parking Spaces Allowed in Front of Buildings</b>
< 7,500	20%
7,501 to 25,000	30%
25,001 to 50,000	40%
50,000 >	50%

- (2) When parking areas are provided in a front yard (in between a public road right-of-way and a principal building), a minimum 18-inch evergreen hedge shall be installed to obscure visibility of the parking lot from the Corridor. This evergreen hedge must reach a minimum height of 2.5 feet within 2 years of planting. Screening may be located in the planting yard if it does not impede other uses or purposes of the yard.
- (3) When parking areas are provided in a front yard (in between a public road right-of-way and a principal building), a combination of landscaped earthen berm and evergreen hedge with a minimum height of 18 inches shall be used. The total height of landscaped earthen berm and hedge combination shall reach a minimum height of 2.5 feet at planting. Screening shall be located in the planting yard if it does not impede other uses or purposes of the yard.

6. *Signage.*

- (A) *Directional Signs.* Billboards and bench signs shall not be permitted in the corridor. To help advertise and direct the motoring public to businesses and activities in Focus Areas that do not directly access the arterial road, or are screened from view, development applicants may provide and seek approval by the City for off-premise joint-use “logo” directional signs. These may be located at the entrance to the focus area, and shall be no more than sixty-four (64) square feet in size and a height of eight (8) feet. Subject to the City’s approval, directional logo signs may be placed at corners of intersections or along appropriate portions of the corridor, immediately outside public rights-of-way, to guide customers and patrons from the arterial road and along public frontage roads to their destinations.
- (B) *Monument Signs.* Freestanding signs shall be monument style. Base and sign structure shall be constructed of materials such as brick, stone, stucco, wood or metal consistent with the architecture and exterior treatment of the building. Signs for single businesses shall not exceed thirty-six (36) square feet in size and a height of six (6) feet. Joint identification signs for multiple businesses at one location may have a monument sign not to exceed sixty-four (64) square feet in size and a height of eight (8) feet. Marketing, spectacular, inflatable/flying, bench, roof, and mobile/portable signs and street banners, as defined in Sections 4.4.5 of the Unified Development Ordinance are not allowed. Canopy and awning sign(s) shall be limited to fifteen square feet per road frontage, and if lighted, the lettering shall be individually formed and lighted.

F. *Building Placement, Height and Intensity.*

1. *Placement Generally.* Buildings should be arranged so that they help frame and define the fronting arterial road or driveways (i.e., the arterial road in the corridor, an intersecting arterial road, or internal streets or driveways of the development), thus giving deliberate form to streets and sidewalk areas.
2. *Building Height.* Commercial buildings located within or adjacent to a residential zoning district shall not exceed the height to those structures allowed by the zoning in the residential area if the commercial structure is located within 100 ft of the property line of the residential zoned area.
3. *Building Mass, Intensity and Density.* Mass of buildings and building intensity (floor area ratios) should be highest when located closest to the arterial road intersection, transitioning to

progressively lower intensities moving outwards to the outer edge of the focus area. Buildings at the outer edge of the focus area should be comparable in mass and intensity with the surrounding neighborhood or existing land uses adjacent and beyond the focus area.

G. *Provisions for Specific Uses.*

1. *Communication Towers.* Communication towers shall only be allowed under the provisions for a Concealed Support Structure as defined under the Unified Development Ordinance.
2. *Fences and Walls.* Where provided and where visible from the right of way of a public road, fences and walls shall be composed of iron, stone, masonry, or concrete. Landscaping should be used to minimize or soften the appearance from the public right-of-way. Chain link fencing shall not be permitted except in side or rear yards of residential developments and shall be screened with vegetation to a height of six (6) feet.
3. *Drive-Through Facilities.* Drive-through facilities shall be located to the rear or side of the building and shall not abut an amenity zone or face the Corridor arterial roadway.

H. *Gas Station Pump Islands.*

Gas station pump islands must be mostly obscured from view from the Corridor, either through location or by plantings or other methods. Pump islands shall only house gas pumps, windshield-cleaning materials, and trash receptacles. Canopies for gas pumps shall have architectural style and detail such as gabled or hip roofs with a three to twelve roof pitch or higher. All support columns shall be brick, brick veneer, or stone construction. Buildings located at establishments selling gasoline shall comply with section 2.5.20.K (*Architecture*). Canopies shall only display logo identification signs. No other advertising is allowed.

I. *Outside Display and Storage and Service Areas.*

1. Exterior storage structures or uses, including the parking or storage of service vehicles, trailers, equipment, containers, crates, pallets, merchandise, materials, fork lifts, trash, recyclables, and all other items shall be permitted only where clearly depicted and labeled on the approved site plan. Such outdoor storage uses and areas shall be appropriately screened as required by this ordinance. The following standards are intended to reduce the impacts of outdoor storage, loading and operations areas on adjacent land uses, and to protect the outdoor area of the subject property.
  - (A) Areas for truck parking and loading shall be screened by a combination of structures and evergreen landscaping to minimize visibility from adjacent streets and residential district lines.
  - (B) Outdoor storage, loading, and operations shall be attractively screened from adjacent parcels and streets.
  - (C) Outdoor storage, trash collection and/or compaction, loading or other such uses shall be located in the rear of the lot. If, because of lot configuration, the Director of Inspections and Code determines that such placement is not feasible, then the side yard may be used, but in no case shall such area(s) be open or face the corridor within a minimum of 100 ft from the right-of-way along River Road.
  - (D) Seasonal merchandise such as Christmas trees, Halloween pumpkins, bedding plants, etc.

may be displayed in any outdoor area up to four times per calendar year for a cumulative total not to exceed eight weeks per year.

- (E) Areas for the storage and sale of all other merchandise shall not be located in parking lots, and shall be permanently defined and confined to areas shown on the initial plans submitted for approval to the City.
- (F) No products containing toxic chemicals, such as fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, cement, etc., shall be stored in any uncovered outside location where they might enter the stormwater drainage system in the event of any spillage, breakage, or tearing of the container.

*J. Stormwater Detention Facilities.*

Open storm drainage and detention areas visible from the corridor shall not be fenced, but shall be landscaped and incorporated into the design of the development as an attractive amenity. Wet-bottom basins are encouraged.

*K. Architecture.*

The following requirements shall apply to all properties lying within the River Road Corridor except single-family developments.

1. Architectural design shall comply with the following performance guidelines:

- (A) Building facades visible from roadways or public parking areas shall be of architectural treatments of glass and/or brick, stone or stucco. Tilt-up or pre-cast concrete or alternate material may be used subject to review and approval of the Planning Director.
- (B) Metal-sided or portable buildings shall be prohibited.
- (C) Roofing materials for pitched or mansard roofs shall be of colors compatible with the building and subject to approval and limited to the following materials:
  - 1) Metal standing seam.
  - 2) Tile, slate or stone.
  - 3) Wood shake.
  - 4) Shingles with a slate, tile or metal appearance.
  - 5) Architectural shingles (asphalt composition shingles)
  - 6) Other materials subject to approval.
- (D) All rooftop mechanical equipment shall be screened by parapets, upper stories, or other areas of exterior walls or roofs so as to not be visible from public streets adjacent to or within 1,000 feet of the subject property, or at least equal to the height of the equipment to be screened, whichever is less. Fences or similar rooftop screening devices may not be used to meet this requirement.

2. Any accessories provided, such as railings, benches, trash receptacles and/or bicycle racks, shall complement the building design and style.

3. Architectural design of all buildings shall comply with the following additional performance

guidelines:

- (A) To lend the appearance of multi-tenant occupancy, facades of multi-tenant buildings shall be varied in depth or parapet height.
- (B) Distinct architectural entry identification for individual tenants' entrances shall be provided for suites exceeding 10,000 square feet of leasable area.
- (C) All out parcel buildings within a proposed development shall be of architectural character comparable to the primary structure as determined by the Planning Department.
- (D) Walls visible from roadways or public parking areas shall incorporate changes in building material/color or varying edifice detail such as trellises, false windows or recessed panels reminiscent of window, door or colonnade openings, landscaping or storefront every 150 linear feet.
- (E) Roof parapets shall be articulated to provide visual diversity. Parapets shall include articulations or architectural features at least every 150 linear feet. The minimum height of articulations or features shall be three feet, and may be provided in height offset or facade projections such as porticoes or towers.
- (F) Articulation of building design shall continue on all facades visible to the general public.
- (G) Building elevation plans shall be subject to review and approval of the Planning Director, or his/her designee, prior to the issuance of a Building Permit, to verify compliance with this ordinance. Designs, which are inconsistent with these performance guidelines, may be denied.

*L. Land Use and Plan Review.*

The Planning Director shall evaluate all proposed development activities in the River Road Corridor. No development permit, land use permit, or building permit shall be issued unless the proposed development, land use, building, or structure is in compliance with this ordinance.

Introduced at a regular meeting of the Council of Columbus, Georgia held on the \_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2015; introduced a second time at a regular meeting of said Council held on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2015 and adopted at said meeting by the affirmative vote of \_\_\_\_\_ members of said Council.

Councilor Allen	voting	_____
Councilor Baker	voting	_____
Councilor Barnes	voting	_____
Councilor Buck	voting	_____
Councilor Davis	voting	_____
Councilor Henderson	voting	_____
Councilor Huff	voting	_____
Councilor Pugh	voting	_____
Councilor Thomas	voting	_____
Councilor Woodson	voting	_____

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**Tiny B. Washington**  
**Clerk of Council**

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**Teresa Pike Tomlinson**  
**Mayor**